(v) Tightening up in-house vigilance activity by surprise checks and inspections.

Besides the automated Customs clearance system presently in operation at Delhi Air Cargo and 6 other locations is being extended to all Customs locations. This system would cut down delays and minimise interface and thus reduce scope for the alleged undesirable practices.

Air Service to capitals of North-Eastern States

*95. SHRI E. BALANANDAN: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are considering to take any steps to connect all the capitals of North-Eastern States with other parts of the country by air; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI ANANTH KUMAR): (a) and (b) The following capitals of the North-Eastern States are linked:—

State	Capital
Assam—	Guwahati
Manipur—	Imphal
Tripura—	Agartala
Mizoram—	Aizwal

Shillong in Meghalaya, Kohima in Nagaland, Itanagar in Arunachal Pradesh and Gangtok in Sikkim are not airlinked at present. There is no airport at Kohima, Itanagar and Gangtok. They are, however, served through Guwahati, Dimapur, Lilabari and Bagdogra respectively.

With a view to achieving better regulation of air transport services and taking into consideration the need for air transport services of different regions in the country particularly the North East Region, the Government has laid down route dispersal guidelines. The airlines are free to provide air services to specific places depending upon the traffic demand and commercial viability subject to compliance with the route dispersal guidelines.

A proposal for developing air services to the North Eastern region is under formulation. This envisages provision of subsidy and other incentives to attract operators for connecting places in the North-East region.

Pending cases in Patna High Court

*96. SHRI S. S. AHLUWALIA: Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state:

(a) the total number of cases pending in Patna High Court as on 30th September, 1997 and how many of these cases are pending for more than five years;

(b) whether backlog of cases in the High Court has shown upward trend in the recent years;

(c) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(d) the steps being taken for the prompt disposal of cases and providing instant justice at the Patna High Court?

THE MINISTER OF LAW, JUSTICE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI M. THAMBI DURAI): (a) As on 30.9.1997, a total of 86,368 cases were pending in Patna High Court. Out of these 20,838 cases were pending for over five years.

(b) No, Sir. As on 1.1.1996 the pendency of cases was 95445 which stand decreased to 84666 as on 31.12.1997.

(c) Does not arise.

(d) The Registry of Patna High Court has informed that the Court have taken several steps for expeditious disposal of cases. Provision has been made to hear first appeal and Civil writ cases by single judge bench which were previously heard by a Division bench. Time to time several new benches are also constituted for hearing ready cases and steps have also been taken for calling for Lower Court Records in order to make cases ready for